

Virginia Higher Education Governance Reform

The challenges posed by the shifting landscape of higher education suggest a new collaborative governance model may be needed. In response to the changing environment, a state-level council should be strategic in focus. It should lead the process of developing a strategic plan—a “living” document—that is constantly evolving to best position the Commonwealth to capitalize on opportunities in higher education and, coordinating with other groups and institutions, to address the objective of TJ-21 to “fuel strong economic growth in the Commonwealth and prepare Virginians for the top job opportunities in the knowledge-driven economy of the 21st century.”

State-level higher education governance could be grounded in a collaborative process focused on:

1. Developing a higher education strategic plan for the Commonwealth,
2. Formulating state-level policies that guide the funding and operations of public universities and colleges,
3. Reviewing and approving the missions of each public institution,
4. Fostering institutional collaboration to achieve cost savings and enhance quality, and
5. Partnering with institutional-level governance to adequately inform and prepare BOV members on issues, policies, plans, and accountability procedures.

A new framework built around a collaborative council could provide the flexibility, responsiveness, and accountability to ensure the Commonwealth’s institutions remain among the finest colleges and universities in the nation while providing the governance structure necessary to achieve the objective and purposes set forth in the provisions of *Preparing for the Top Jobs of the 21st Century: The Virginia Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011* (TJ21).